Worst Train Wreck In History

Sunday Night, August 7th, near Eden station on the Denver & Rio Grande railroad 8 miles north of Pueblo, occurred the most disastrous wreck in the annals of railroad history in the United States. A heavily loaded passenger train plunged through a bridge weakened by flood waters surging through a usually dry creek, with the result that nearly 100 lives were lost.

So far as known but three escaped from the two passenger coaches that were literally swallowed by the flood waters. The catastrophe plunged the city of Pueblo into mourning, as the majority of the victims were residents of this city.

"No. 11 is in the ditch!"

This meager announcement was imparted to a limited number of persons in Pueblo about 9:30 o'clock on Sunday night, August 7. About the same time The Chieftain office was notified that an accident had happened to the Missouri Pacific flyer.

"A number of cars are off the track near Pinon, but there are no fatalities." This statement came from a practically reliable source, it was thought, and no particular haste was employed to get at the details.

Not long after it had been learned that something had happened the train the chief dispatcher at the Rio Grande office was called up by telephone. An assistant answered the call and in reply to the question, "How about the reported wreck of No. 11?" replied briefly and hurriedly, "The chief dispatcher is very busy just now, and I can't tell you a thing."

The cause of the chief dispatcher's strenuous and uninterrupted devotion to duty at that hour could have been explained by this message, which had just been received from Night Operator Evans at Eden:

"Eleven — through — bridge — No. 5."

This was the first instructions the dispatcher's office had received in regard to the greatest railroad disaster in the history of the United States.

The wrecker and a relief train were immediately ordered out. Later it was officially learned that a number of persons had been injured. This demanded the service of physicians and the half dozen doctors who comprised the first corps to reach the scene went supplied with bandages, soothing lotions and the necessary supplies to ease the pain of mangled bodies and broken limbs. But this preparation was without the proper reckoning.

It was now two hours since the disaster had occurred, but details were yet unavailable. The railroad officials were not in possession of actual facts concerning the extent of the fatalities—and what they were reasonably supposed to conjecture they kept to themselves.



Dr. Walter F. Munn, Pueblo Physician who Perished in the Wreck.



OFFICIALS AND JURYMEN INVESTIGATING WRECK.

Top Row--C. C. Robinson, Foreman of Jury; District Attorney J. H. H. Low, Sheriff J. L. Beaman, Coroner A. L. Fugard.

Bottom Row--J. N. Collins, Jno. McDonald, J. R. Mihoover, A. B. Allen, D. H. Spurgeon, Members of the Jury.



Wrecker at Work Clearing Away Debris.

By 11 o'clock the telephones in all offices where it would be naturally supposed the desired information would first find its way were becoming almost incessantly active. Chief of Police Shoup and Acting Night Captain Wilson had been notified that police assistance and co-operation were needed. A score of patrolmen were called to police headquarters and preparations were hastily made to go out on the second relief train, consisting of a switch engine, baggage car and one coach.

Hundreds of people—men, women and boys gathered at the Union depot and eagerly seized every semblance of news from the wreck. But no one seemed to know anything definite. Soon the real seriousness of the affair was mutely told when several trucks loaded with pine boxes and coffins were rolled out and loaded in the baggage car. To the average spectator the inanimate objects appearing on the trucks were like stretchers too, dozens of them, and the sudden hush that fell upon the crowd was intensified by the presence of an undertaker and his assistants, who silently went about the preliminary preparations for taking care of the dead. The exact number who had perished no one as yet knew, but obviously there were many.

The baggage car attended to those in charge of the expedition turned their attention to the usefulness of the men who were to form the relief party.

None but those who were known to Chief Shoup and his officers were allowed to board the train. In this way the efficiency of the relief party was guaranteed.

The train seemed slow in getting under way, but when it at last pulled out through the yards headed for the scene of the disaster it moved none too sluggishly for some of the occupants of the cars. Thought of the realization of the worst fears caused at least a dozen of the passengers to sit in silence unbroken. There was but one subject discussed and this was done so quietly that the sound of a voice was seldom heard above the rumble of the train.

Before the train reached Eden, eight miles north of Pueblo, it was learned that nearly all the occupants of two cars of the ill-fated train had been plunged, without warning, to watery graves. An engineer on one first engine to reach Eden informed the relief party that John M. Killin, Fireman Dave Mayfield and probably two others had escaped.

The train passed the little station at Eden and stopped about 300 yeads south of the wreck. Chief Shoup divided the party into squads of eight each squad in charge of a policeman. No one knew exactly what was expected of him but the roar of the torrent in the channel of the Fountain river seemed to say, "this way!" and the one hundred men at once became searchers for the dead.



Miss Stella McDonald.

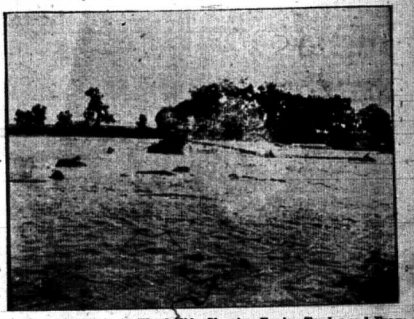


Miss Etta W. Bishop.

distributed along the banks of the river. Insufficient light handicapped the searchers, and it was with extreme difficulty that they were able to pick their way along the shores of the treacherous stream. After an hour of diligent search Police Officer Jones and his party discovered the body of Engineer Hinman, whose hand was on the throttle when the engine and cars crashed through the bridge. The searchers continued their efforts until after 2 o'clock Monday morning, when it was decided that little could be accomplished until after dawn, and they returned to the scene of the disaster.

Employees of the Rio Grande railroad company were already at work clearing

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Fountain River at Flood Tide Showing Engine Tender and Fragments of Baggage Car.

The rain had ceased, but dark clouds obscured the starlight and the black night which enveloped the water-soaked prairie was all but impenetrable. Flickering torches at a little distance to the right beckoned the late arrivals to a spot near the bank of the stream where a little party of men had already commenced the task of causing the river to surrender its dead. The bodies of three females—two women and a young girl—were stretched in ashy stillness upon the wet ground. These were the first victims recovered, and they remained unidentified until the



Jno. F. Bishop.



Emily Wood, Sister of Jesse R. Wood.



Triple Funeral of Thomas Family Coming Down Main Street, Near Fifth, Showing the Three Hearses and the Carriage Containing the Four Orphaned Children.



Henry Hinman, Engineer of the ill-fated train.



Mrs. George West, wife of Ex-Mayor West, who perished with her sister in Sunday's wreck.



Bed of Dry Creek, Where the Wreck Occurred, Showing Portion of a Car Buried in Mud and Sand.



Dr. James B. McGregor of Ballard, Washington, who met death while a visitor in Pueblo.



Crowd Watching Men at Work on Chair Car in Which Many Lost Their Lives.